

Roll Call

A regular meeting of the Kalamazoo City Commission was held on Monday, January 3, 2022 at 7:00 p.m. in the City Commission Chambers at City Hall.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Mayor David Anderson
Vice Mayor Don Cooney
Qianna Decker
Jeanne Hess
Esteven Juarez
Chris Praedel

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:

Stephanie Hoffman

Also present were City Manager Jim Ritsema, Deputy City Manager Jeff Chamberlain, City Attorney Clyde Robinson, and City Clerk Scott Borling.

Commissioner Excused

Commissioner Hess, seconded by Commissioner Decker, moved to excuse the absence of Commissioner Hoffman. With a voice vote the motion passed.

Invocation

The invocation was given by Rev. Dr. Dave Zomer of Bethany Reformed Church, was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Adoption of the Agenda

By unanimous consent the City Commission adopted its meeting agenda as presented.

Communications

City Manager Ritsema announced he wanted to have a discussion later in the meeting around youth development and the emergency vehicle included in the proposed 2022 budget.

Public Comments

Next, when an opportunity was given for general public comments, the following people addressed the City Commission:

In Person Comments

Nehemiah Scudder, City resident, spoke about the lack of beds for homeless people.

Alphonso Harris, City resident, spoke about his need for housing.

Eric Cunningham, City resident, spoke about the need for the City to improve its communications. Mr. Cunningham urged Commissioners to dig into the appointee evaluation process and include benchmarks. Mr. Cunningham encouraged the Commission to take a proactive approach to youth development.

Jeff Messer, City resident, reported Kalamazoo Public Library branches would close at 8:00 tonight and stay closed for two weeks because of the pandemic.

Ben Stanley, City resident, spoke about the need for mental health services.

Call-In Comments

Betty Edmonds, City resident, requested a public bathroom downtown.

Dr. Theodore Sanders, Chairman of the Kalamazoo Unified Youth Football Association, expressed support for youth development funding.

Jeff Weisman, City resident, spoke about streetlights that needed to be repaired on Kalamazoo Avenue and the use of engine brakes by trucks on Kalamazoo Avenue. Mr. Weisman discussed the lack of on-street parking enforcement by Public Safety.

At 7:24 p.m. Mayor Anderson opened a public hearing to receive comments on the Fiscal Year 2022 Proposed Budget for the City of Kalamazoo.

City Manager Ritsema remarked the proposed budget was almost \$245 million, and he noted there had been a budget work session on December 13th.

When an opportunity was given for public comments, the following people addressed the City Commission.

In Person Comments

Zachary Lassiter, City resident, asked about the City's support for housing in the 2022 budget.

Jeff Messer, City resident, asked the City Commission refuse to fund any part of any department budget that was supporting a mass surveillance system, until those department received approval from the City Commission for these systems.

Ben Stanley, City resident, spoke about the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) process and being denied access to a press conference.

Creed Stegall, City resident, asked that the City use the 2022 budget to make neighborhood association meetings more inclusive of the whole neighborhood.

Nehemiah Scudder, City resident, asked that the City include funds in the budget to subsidize pod housing for the homeless.

Call-in Comments

Joe Byers, City resident, asked that the City dedicate more resources to planting trees.

At 7:41 p.m. Mayor Anderson closed the public hearing.

City Manager Ritsema announced the proposed FY2022 budget would be brought forward for approval on Tuesday, January 18th.

Consent Agenda items were presented as follows with a recommendation to approve the items and authorize the City Manager to sign all documents on behalf of the city:

- authorization for the City Attorney to execute an agreement with the Miller-Johnson law firm to provide attorney services in connection with negotiations with surrounding municipalities for wastewater services.

Public Comments
(cont'd)

2022-0001
Public Hearing re: the
FY2022 Budget

Consent Agenda

2022-0002

- 2022-0003** - approval of a two-year contract extension with Eagle Claims Management for excess workers' compensation insurance in the amount of \$418,141.
- 2022-0004** - approval of a professional services agreement with Abonmarche Consultants, Inc. for the Ransom Street Utility Upgrade & ROW Improvements design in the amount of \$469,755.66.
- 2022-0005** - approval of a contract with Davis Construction Inc. for Stadium Drive Culvert replacement in the amount of \$609,587.28.
- 2022-0006** - approval of a one-year term contract extension for gasoline and diesel fuel with Kalamazoo Oil Inc. for an amount not to exceed \$750,000.
- 2022-0007** - approval of a contract with Davis Construction, Inc. for the construction of the Kalamazoo Water Reclamation Plant's Tertiary Disc Filtration Process Facility in the amount of \$13,711,233.
- 2022-0008** - approval of an agreement granting Consumers Energy an easement across City- owned property at 2740 N. 6th Street.
- 2022-0009** - approval of the minutes from the City Commission Meetings on December 6, 2021.

Commissioner Decker, seconded by Commissioner Praedel, moved to approve the consent agenda requests and authorize the City Manager to sign all documents on behalf of the City.

With a roll call vote this motion passed.

AYES: Commissioners Decker, Hess, Juarez, Praedel, Vice Mayor Cooney, Mayor Anderson

NAYS: None

**City Manager's Report:
Discussion of Youth
Development Programs**

City Manager Ritsema offered the following reports and updates:

- the purchase/proposal of an emergency response vehicle would be postponed until 2023 to allow for the creation and implementation of an emergency management office.
- the City had been receiving emails and calls from residents asking for more funding for youth development programs. City Manager Ritsema recommended the formation of a City Commission subcommittee to look at ways to make significant investments in youth development, building on the City's existing infrastructure for youth programming.

Parks and Recreation Director Sean Fletcher and Assistant Public Safety Chief Victor Green discussed the City's capacity to expand its youth athletic leagues.

Commissioners Hess volunteered to be on the subcommittee.

In response to questions from City Commissioners, Assistant Public Safety Chief Victor Green and Parks and Recreation Director Sean Fletcher provided the following information:

- to expand youth programming, the City would need to hire a youth program supervisor to liaise with community organizations and coordinate the programs and people.
- staff were working with the CFO to determine whether American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds could be used for these youth development initiatives.
- community input would be important to help the City identify the needs and to identify the people and organizations in the community already doing this work.
- the City struggled to collect data on youth who were not participating in its programs, as staff focus was usually on program participants rather than non-participants.
- the City offered programs and/or facilities for archery, bowling, golf, and e-sports, in addition to soccer and football.
- the City could potentially partner with area existing sports organizations like little leagues and AYSO, but it would be important for the City to get community input to identify the programs and activities people wanted and where there were gaps.
- the City Commission subcommittee could help with gathering community input and developing metrics for programs.

Commissioner Juarez highlighted the need to have the right adults involved in these programs – adults who would care about the kids. Commissioner Juarez stated community engagement was very important and suggested the City could use a staff member to help follow up with the kids who fall through the cracks.

Commissioner Decker spoke about the need to prevent youth from getting to the point where they caused harm to themselves and others, and she highlighted the need for the community to be invested in this work.

In response to a question from Commissioner Decker, City Manager Ritsema suggested the subcommittee do its work in phases, with the first task being to identify short-term solutions by March or April so they could be implemented for the summer program season. Once the short-term solutions were in place, the subcommittee could work on medium- and long-term solutions and goals, which could include a process for gathering community input.

Vice Mayor Cooney spoke about the need to capitalize on staff enthusiasm and leverage and support existing community resources already doing the work of investing in young people. Vice Mayor Cooney stated the City should be the catalyst to develop a collective response to help kids succeed.

Mayor Anderson expressed support for the creation of a subcommittee, to include staff and community partners. Mayor Anderson suggested the subcommittee have a short turnaround time for bringing forward its initial recommendations.

When Mayor Anderson asked for volunteers to be on the subcommittee with Commissioner Hess, Vice Mayor Cooney and Commissioner Juarez indicated they were willing to serve.

City Manager's Report:
Discussion of Youth
Development Programs
(cont'd)

2022-0010

Creation of a Youth
Development
Subcommittee

Commissioner Praedel, seconded by Commissioner Decker, moved to create a Youth Development Subcommittee and appoint Vice Mayor Cooney, Commissioner Hess, and Commissioner Juarez as members of the subcommittee.

Prior to a vote on the motion, Commissioner Praedel observed that young people were affected by COVID-19 more than any other group. Commissioner Praedel stated he would like to see a multi-year strategy for Parks and Recreation funding, with American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) funds as a potential source. Commissioner Praedel remarked that Kalamazoo should have the best funded Parks and Recreation Department for a city of its size. Commissioner Praedel stated the City could not wait until spring to address gun violence.

With a roll call vote this motion passed.

AYES: Commissioners Decker, Hess, Juarez, Praedel, Vice Mayor Cooney, Mayor Anderson

NAYS: None

Commissioner
Comments

Finally, an opportunity was given for miscellaneous comments from City Commissioners.

Commissioner Juarez remarked about the amount of work to be done for the City to show the Community it cared. Commissioner Juarez also spoke about the need for Commissioners to get buy-in from the community and staff in order to get the work done. Commissioner Juarez offered comments on people working together and having an impact that would last for decades.

Commissioner Praedel recognized former Commissioner Cunningham and his passion for youth development. Commissioner Praedel stated the City needed to invest in and improve its communication efforts to tell the community about the work being done. Commissioner Praedel commented on the emergency vehicle that was removed from the proposed 2022 budget and stated a vehicle that sat in a parking lot most of the time was not a priority for the City Commission, given the other needs in the community. Commissioner Praedel requested the resumption of monthly meetings with the neighborhood associations, even if it meant using Committee of the Whole meetings for these interactions.

Commissioner Hess thanked Commissioners and staff for the discussion on youth development. Commissioner Hess talked about Styrofoam recycling even on January 1st and announced the last pilot event would take place on January 29th. Commissioner Hess noted the annual Foundation for Excellence (FFE) newsletter had been delivered to City residents. Commissioner Hess read a poem by Angela Gorman.

Commissioner Decker stated the 54th City Commission would move Kalamazoo forward and make a difference in the lives of others. Commissioner Decker thanked Director Fletcher and Assistant Chief Green for their passion for young people. Commissioner Decker expressed concern that the Kalamazoo Public Library would be closed, and people would not be able to get information on the City Commission's activity. Commissioner Decker invited people to the Winter Classic at Woods Lake golf event. Commissioner Decker commented on outdated City policies and expressed hope they would be updated.

Vice Mayor Cooney offered remarks on the life of Archbishop Desmond Tutu and noted Western Michigan University was the sixth university in America to break economic ties with South Africa. Vice Mayor Cooney pointed out that Nelson Mandela fought against constitutional racism, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. fought against *de facto* racism. Vice Mayor Cooney stated ending racism needed to be at the top of the City's goals in 2022.

Mayor Anderson stated he had made a public resolution to head into 2022 with hope and optimism, and he expressed hope that the City Commission would be able to look back at this year and identify the good things it had done. Mayor Anderson remarked that philanthropy was one of the themes of 2021, and he suggested that everyone who gave of themselves was a philanthropist.

The meeting adjourned at 8:44 p.m.

Scott A. Borling
City Clerk

Approved by the City Commission on: _____

Commissioner
Comments (cont'd)

Adjournment